

# CHRONIC PAIN

Arizona Department of Corrections  
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program  
HEP 1063- 01/06

## What is chronic pain?

Chronic pain is frequent or constant pain that does not respond to the usual treatments. Chronic pain can last for months, years, or sometimes for the rest of your life.

Chronic pain is not a normal result of getting older. However, many conditions that cause chronic pain (such as arthritis and cancer) are common among older adults.

## How does it occur?

Pain usually starts as the result of some injury to the body. Each person experiences pain differently. Some people have chronic pain because they were never treated for an earlier injury or problem.

## How is it evaluated?

Your chronic pain will need to be evaluated thoroughly. Several types of health care professionals may participate in the evaluation. This process will involve a thorough physical exam, an in-depth interview, a review of the current problem, and the past medical history including a review of medications.

## How is it treated?

Treatment of **chronic pain** usually requires several approaches combined into a pain management program designed just for you.

## Medications

The right medication for your pain may be one medicine or a combination of medicines. Drugs other than narcotics are used to treat mild to moderate pain. Among these medicines are acetaminophen (Tylenol), aspirin, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil, Nuprin).

Narcotics such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, morphine and methadone are strong drugs that are used to relieve moderate to severe pain. They are available in long-acting forms. These drugs are sometimes used to manage chronic pain, but only after trying other medicines and non-drug treatments.

Other types of medicines used for pain control include steroids, sedatives, and drugs usually used to control depression or convulsions.

## Other Treatments

Pain often cannot be managed by medication alone. Other treatments may include:

- heat
- cold
- an exercise program, such as walking
- counseling
- programs to change behavior, including use of relaxation methods, imagery, music, and meditation
- healthy diet
- hobbies and social activities

Treatment of **chronic pain** can be difficult for both you and your health care provider. Keep your follow-up appointments so your provider can find out what is helping and what is not. Together you can continue to seek a solution.

